

How to Poop in the Woods

Troop 518 Training

There are no latrines or bathrooms in the areas in that you will be hiking. This is a big problem for everyone. There are two things you should know about using the bathroom outdoors that are contrary to what older outdoorsmen will tell you. 1) It is no longer safe to poop just anywhere in the great outdoors, or use any old method that you like. 2) Because thousands of hikers have been on every trail before you, and pooped just anywhere they felt like, it is no longer safe to drink mountain water, no matter how clear or safe it looks. This lesson will hopefully help you become more aware of the proper method you should use when you need to relieve yourself while hiking. Proper collection of drinking water will be covered in another lesson.

TOOLS REQUIRED

Pocketknife or cutters, plastic backpacking (orange) shovel, toilet paper kept in a plastic bag.

STEP 1

Always go up. When you feel the “urge to purge” get off the trail and head for high ground. Safeguard the water sources for everyone downstream by moving away from streams, rivers and lakes. Avoid dry streambeds or any place where water might run or flood after heavy rains.

STEP 2

Find a stick. As you walk into the woods looking for your place of rest, select a green stick about 12” long. This stick will be used to “collect” and “stir” in Steps 4 and 5.

STEP 3

Dig a hole. After finding a likely spot, dig a hole 6” to 8” deep and about 8” around. You might want this hole near a small tree, vine or fence post which you can pull on to keep from sitting backwards into your mess. An orange plastic shovel is very handy for digging.

STEP 4

Hit the hole. It will be nearly impossible to place all the mess in the hole, but you can try. Use your stick to push all the toilet paper and mess into the hole when finished. Do not use the plastic shovel. Every speck of solid waste must end up in the hole.

STEP 5

Stir in the dirt. Add one plastic shovel full of topsoil and leaves to the hole. Use the stick to stir the dirt in with the toilet paper and mess in the bottom of the hole. The organic matter and top soil introduce the correct natural ingredients to quickly break down your body waste.

STEP 6

Bury it. Everything with human solid waste on it (including the stick) must go in the hole and be covered over with packed fill dirt. This protects the spot from being dug up by scavengers who would eventually infect the nearby streams, rivers and lakes with the cysts from your waste.

STEP 7

Hide it. Do a good job of covering your work. Spread leaves and pine straw over the area so no one will be able to tell you’ve been there.

For more information:

- Research *Giardia lamblia* (or *Giardiasis*) cysts, and *Cryptosporidium*
- Read the book *How To S**t in the Woods* by Kathleen Meyer (Paperback - Sept 1994)